

Second Workshop, Tour Conducted for Downtown Master Plan

Broaddus and Associates, the Downtown Master Plan consultants, held meetings throughout the day on May 21, 2007 with various city departments and commissions to gain base information and understanding of particular issues in San Marcos, discussing topics ranging from utility infrastructure to emergency services and beautification.

Later that evening, a community workshop was held at the San Marcos Activity Center, attended by approximately 60 people. Like previous meetings, this workshop involved interaction between the consultants and members of the audience. The consultants reported many of the results from previous workshops, including:

People view San Marcos as a gateway, a college town, a tourist destination, and a great place to live.

When asked what San Marcos should be in 10 years, people responded that it should reflect the human fabric it is woven from, a community with a heart, a place to retire, a vital center for culture, a flagship for environmental preservation, a town that embraces and reflects its unique cultural heritage, and a haven from urban sprawl.

Attendees felt San Marcos could benefit from improved traffic flow, better control of unchecked growth, more parking, additional cultural resources, enticement to keep educated graduates in the community, better commuter resources, and closer watch on environmental issues.

As a result of public input, Broaddus began to develop key points to promoting and developing downtown, including creation of a strong downtown identity, inviting business opportunities, retaining graduated students, assisting visitors through improved way finding, promoting access through commuter rail, increasing convenience through additional parking, and simplifying traffic flow. Identified points of frustration for people include stoplights, long and frequent trains, lack of parking, and flooding.

The following morning Broaddus and Associates, with special assistance from Kelly Franks, Main Street Coordinator, conducted a walking tour of downtown. Approximately 25 people participated in the three-hour excursion throughout downtown, identifying weaknesses and opportunities throughout the area. Many issues surfaced as the tour progressed, particularly the pedestrian environment, connection between the river and downtown, utilizing alleys as pedestrian and view corridors, flooding and storm water problems, parking, and desire for an inclusive market place with a variety of services.

Later that evening Broaddus and Associates presented these findings and a few preliminary sketches to the Planning and Zoning Commission. One of their early thoughts was recalibrating the height restriction to adjust boundaries and provide incentives for transferring rights to another site. Also, they felt San Marcos needs to enhance the connection between downtown and the San Marcos River. Given the cultural diversity of San Marcos, particularly arts and music, Broaddus and Associates plans to

investigate the potential for districts to give identity to different parts of the area. The consultants saw alleys as a prime opportunity for creating small business opportunities and improved pedestrian connectivity, which is consistent with another preliminary goal to foster an inclusive marketplace.

As expected, parking was a major item of interest. Broaddus and Associates noted that despite being between semesters at the university, parking spaces remained full throughout downtown. While they mentioned full parking was a sign of a healthy downtown, they indicated it may need more spaces to continue its success. In addition, they felt the speed of through traffic made existing spaces dangerous. Finally, the consultants indicated that a single parking garage may not solve the need for spaces.

Broaddus and Associates identified several preliminary opportunities, such as establishing CM Allen as a gateway to alleviate pressure from Guadalupe, commuter rail, branding districts, reusing civic buildings, redevelopment of large, under-utilized parcels, tapping into creativity coming out of the university, attraction of employment anchors, and attraction of retiring baby boomers.